

Tapes tell how to bargain better

Working out agreements is a big part of any job, no matter what business you're in. A new audio-tape cassette course has hundreds of suggestions for improving your negotiating skills.

The title, "The Secrets of Power Negotiating," may sound a bit bluster, but the content is mostly common-sense techniques that will help you negotiate win-win deals. The techniques work whether you're in sales, management or running your own business.

The set of six cassettes, available for \$49.95 from Nightingale-Conant Corp. of Chicago, features the accumulated knowledge of British-born businessman Roger Dawson. A former California real estate company president, Dawson studied negotiating techniques, passed the skills onto his employees and watched his profits grow. Since 1983, he's been on the seminar circuit.

Dawson narrates the tapes with a self-assured, slight English accent and packs them with useful tips and telling examples. Much of the material is broken into two- or three-minute "chapters," a style



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that makes the tapes easy to break away from and pick up again.

Here is a sampling of Dawson's negotiating tactics, taken from just one side of one cassette:

■ **Flinch** when you first hear a proposal, Dawson counsels. No matter how reasonable the offer may sound, flinching opens the door to negotiation and a better deal.

■ **If you're making the offer**, put it in writing. When prices or terms are in black and white, they're taken more seriously. He illustrates this with a story about a youngster selling recycled golf balls out of an egg carton. Dawson said he was ready to negotiate toughly with the boy — until he saw the prices written on the inside of the carton. Disarmed, he paid full price.

■ **Know the concessions you're willing to make** during the negotia-

tion, and begin with a medium-size one. If you begin with the smallest and work up to the largest, the other person will think you're holding back, and you may never close the deal.

■ **If you're in the middle of a negotiation**, you feel you're being "ground down" by the other person and you're unhappy with the result, withdraw your offer or be prepared to be unhappy with the deal.

■ **When negotiations are complete**, always offer to have your attorney write the contract. This way you decide about the minor details that weren't covered in the negotiation. Once presented as a fait accompli, the other person rarely will go to the trouble of changing them unless they're very important.

■ **Make sure the other person feels good about the deal you've made**. Make an immaterial concession if necessary. Always congratulate and never gloat.

Beyond this, Dawson also gives tips about using time and information to your advantage in a negotiation, body language cues and understanding personality types. Two

whole tapes are devoted to negotiating tactics.

But despite his general advice to avoid dishonesty in negotiation, Dawson sometimes contradicts himself.

For example, he recommends shaking the other person's hand and telling him he's the toughest negotiator you've faced in years, even when that may not have been the case. Clearly a manipulative technique.

"The Secrets of Power Negotiating" draws lots of examples from the world of sales, where money is the big item on the negotiating table.

For a supervisor or manager, these examples may be less than appropriate.

The bottom line: I loved these tapes and think they're better and more entertaining than others I've listened to on the subject.

Hillel Segal's column has been broadened to include evaluations of gadgets, seminars and books designed to enhance business productivity. Segal is a management consultant based in Boulder.